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Discite, ô miseri, et causas cognoscite rerum.

PERS.

Mortals, attend the causes of your woe.

To the Authors of the AERONAUT.

"In addressing you, I do not doubt that you will be surprised at receiving a letter from one who never was visible, and whom every one supposed was incapable of doing any thing of this kind. Nevertheless, I have a very powerful influence over mankind, they leave to me the management of most

of their concerns, and look upon me as the great agent of their duties. To be candid, my influence is too often exceedingly pernicious; and though it is no fault of mine, those who rely too much on me are sure to be brought to misery. My character & reputation of course suffer; and I would intreat you either to make this letter public, or to communicate my ideas for the consideration of mankind.

"As I have already remarked, no man ever saw me. I am by nature and constitution doomed always to keep out of sight. I keep before the bark of life, I guide on its course, I point forward to futurity, but my voice is felt, not heard, my instructions are obeyed, but my form remains shrouded in impenetrable darkness. I am the beacon of the great, the wise, and the good; but I am also the evil spirit who

wrecks the falsely confident mariner, allures him on with promises of beauty, and dashes him on the shoals which his folly has ~~led~~ pursued. But all this mischief arises from an entire misapprehension of my nature. Those who know what I am, succeed in their enterprises, and calculate upon their future exertions.

"I am attended in my progress by HOPE, the daughter of heaven, and the comforter of man. We spread together our alluring charms, and those alone who mistake the lovely vision for reality, are defeated in their expectations. Behind me follows DESPAIR, DISAPPOINTMENT, and REGRET. They brood over the spots where my victims have fallen, and mock their dying agonies. They point with unfeeling hand to the past, and mingle with the dreary prospect of the future, a wish, now useless and tantalising, that all had

been perceived before, which now bursts upon their sight so strongly.

"Various are the ways in which these wretched beings rely upon me. Some through a sluggishness of doing any thing whatever, expect that I will perform what they will not do themselves. But I hold on my way, and while they trace with untiring perseverance my paths of darkness, they perish in the toil. One in particular I would mention, who endeavored to go through life with total inactivity. The powers of his mind were neglected, the faculties of his body suffered to become useless; yet he contrived to keep me in immediate advance, and was continually urging upon my ears the performance of his duties. When at last he fell, no one pitied his fate; and as he lay gasping on the shoal of time, he mourned when too late the misimprovement of his former opportunities.

"I have seen others refusing to have assistance, when their health was suffering every hour, merely because they thought that I would bring relief. Day after day past on, and I was as far distant, and as much relied on as ever, till death closed the scene. Others have I beheld rolling down a deep and awful precipice, but whose descent was so gradual, that they might have saved themselves, were they not so certain that I would rescue them; their mangled limbs & dying groans only shewed how inexorable was my course.

"Nay, the common duties of life, the precepts of religion, have all been neglected for my sake. Some in the midst of crime think that I will bring a calm to their remorse. The stung and irritated conscience looks to me for relief, and postpones the thoughts of religion or of heavenly

consolation till I can be seen. Alas! more fleeting than the billow that hurries over the ocean, no mortal hand can withdraw the veil that hides me from observation.

"If thus, I am so destructive in my course; if I shut out the attainment of religion, of comfort, of health, of safety, of knowledge, of mere repose; if I hold out visions which mock the eye and betray the wretch that believes them; if I pause not to repair the mischief I have occasioned, nor to commiserate the misfortunes of those who trusted in me & perished;— if all these evils track my way, and cover me with reproach, I may appear a monster of the blackest dye, as one who should be loaded with execrations, and whom men should think of only to abhor. Thou that judgest thus rashly, pause, and behold the converse of the picture.

"Those, who have the wisdom and the sagacity to avoid the dangerous paths that their companions pursue, think very differently of me. The man of industry looks to me to realize his hopes, but he places no confidence in my power. He pursues his course steadily, and ~~the~~ flowers and incense are scattered from my cloud of gloom. He depends upon his own exertions, & I incite him forward to greater enterprise. The mourner dries his tears, lest I should increase them, & joy and gladness are seen upon his path. He who would seek the favor of heaven, pauses not in vain expectation of my procuring it for him, but begins himself. I shew him mansions of bliss, and everlasting delight. I withdraw his gaze from the present, and unfold to his view a long and glorious scene. I bless each moment of his life, and in the gulf of death

I beckon him to the bustle yet to be revealed.

"If therefore I have occasioned mischief, it is because my character has not been duly appreciated; – if I have betrayed into misfortune, it is because I was supposed to be possessed of powers never given to me. Swift as the flight of time, I must move along, and if I elude the grasp of the self-deluded victim, am I to be blamed for the event? Is my negative influence to be arraigned before the bar of human reason, because the latter cannot so summon the resolution to resist it? No. – I have sailed over the ruin of empires, and the fall of human grandeur; but I am not answerable for those who expect what I cannot perform, and leave to me the execution of what they are too indolent to do for themselves.

"I have not however been without those of mankind who endeavored to give to their fellow-men just conceptions of ~~them~~ my character & delusiveness. If these admonitions have been scorned, who is to blame for the consequences? If wisdom & experience, the lore of ages, and the toil of centuries, have not shewn mankind what I am, whom have they to accuse but themselves!

"I am destined to proceed in my course unretarded as heretofore. I shall still probably have to lament the multitudes that persevere in their folly. But the period shall come, ~~so~~ when they and I shall cease them to lead & follow. Myself an attendant on the course of the great destroyer Time, I must with him be lost in eternity, when that dreadful day shall come, which prophets have foretold to man, and which

shall behold the completion of finite existence. But let those who now rely in vain upon me remember that I shall appear then in all my terrors and in all my lustre. I shall stand as a witness of their folly, and prove how weakly they once acted in life. I shall pause in my career; I shall no longer exist to shadow with uncertainty, or to be the cause of the neglect & delay of duty.

"I trust that you, gentlemen, are fully aware of the truth of all my assertions. Be not startled at the apparent incongruity of my writing to you with my character. It would be more surprising if a voice were to rise from the tombs to bear testimony to my assertions. As I fleet along, I fling back to you this monitory warning, by which both you may yourselves profit, and from

which others may learn to live as they ought to do, without useless procrastination and mischievous delay; without placing a mistaken confidence in my powers, or trusting for happiness or acquirement in the visions of

"TO-MORROW."